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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4216
INFO RUCNMR/MERCOSUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0226
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL//SCJ5//
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS ASUNCION 000479

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR WHA/BSC, INL, AND EB/IFD/OIA
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR LAC/AA
STATE PASS TO USTR FOR LYANG
NSC FOR SUE CRONIN
TREASURY FOR OSIA MAUREEN WAFER
TREASURY FOR OTA WARFIELD, VAN KOCH, MILLAR
COMMERCE FOR ITA SARAH COOK
SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD
NAIROBI FOR MICHAEL FITZPATRICK

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: PARAGUAY POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC UPDATE, APRIL 30-
MAY 6, 2006

REF: ASUNCION 0348

11. (U) SUMMARY:

--Demonstration on May Day
--Patria Libre Members Captured
--19 Rescued from Brothel in Spain
--Exploiting Children
--Taiwanese President Visits Paraguay

Demonstration on May Day

12. (U) On 5/1, approximately 5,000 members of labor unions, opposition parties, students and other organizations participated in an annual labor-day demonstration. This year, however, Monsignor Fernando Lugo and his Resistencia Ciudadana organization helped organize the event. Many of the speakers focused their comments on the economy, unemployment and critiques of President Duarte's inability to solve the country's problems. (reftel) COMMENT: Although the 5/1 demonstration did not draw nearly as many participants as the 3/29 demonstration, it offered another opportunity to capture the limelight, fueling continued consideration of Lugo's possible presidential candidacy for 2008 elections. End Comment)

Patria Libre Members Captured in Argentina

13. (U) On 5/2, five members of the Patria Libre (Free Fatherland) Party (PPL), Simeon Bordon Salinas, Agustin Acosta Gonzalez, Roque Rodriguez Torales, Basiliano Cardozo Gimenez and Aristides Vera were arrested, after attempting to obtain refugee status from the government of Argentina. On 5/4, the Paraguayan Attorney General's Office told PolOff that the accused remain in custody and are expected to be expelled from Argentina and turned over to the Paraguayan authorities at the border, avoiding the hassle of extradition. Paraguayan authorities are still looking to apprehend three other individuals who have absconded upon release by GOP authorities. (NOTE: Prior to the arrest of the five in

Argentina, the individuals had been under investigation in connection to the Cecilia Cubas kidnapping and murder but had been released from custody in Paraguay for lack of sufficient evidence. End Note)

19 Rescued from Brothel in Spain

14. (U) On 5/4, local press reported that 19 Paraguayan women were detained in Albacete, Spain during a police operation to close down local sex clubs on April 11. During the investigation, Spanish authorities learned that the Paraguayan women were victims of forced prostitution. Four other persons were detained in connection to the illegal immigration of some 800 women, the majority of whom were Paraguayan. Spanish authorities learned of the women's plight after 2 Paraguayan women escaped their captors and entered a police station in the City of Real, Spain. Teresa Martinez told PolOff that information from Interpol regarding the victims and the traffickers is forthcoming. It is not known at this point if the victims will be repatriated. Pos will continue to monitor the developments in this case. (NOTE: In the past, when victims of trafficking, especially those in Spain, are not repatriated to Paraguay, the GOP does not list them in their total number of victims. End Note.)

Exploiting Children

15. (U) On 4/28, PolOff met with Bernardo Puente, Representative of the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Paraguay, regarding the state of child labor and sexual exploitation of children. Puente indicated that child labor is an established part of the economy of Paraguay and more than 322,000 children participate in various economic activities and an additional 687,000 do domestic work, mostly in rural areas. In

reference to sexual exploitation of children, Puente highlighted that there are more than 250 young girls working as prostitutes in Ciudad de Este and more than 3,500 that have been sexually exploited in some way.

He said the children range in age of 5 to 17 and that pedophiles prey on children with virtual impunity, often only having to pay a fine for their freedom. (NOTE: United Nations reports indicate that 2 out of 3 sexual workers in Paraguay are minors and most of them begin between 12 and 13 years old. Prostitution is legal in Paraguay for those 18 years and older. End Note.)

Taiwanese President Visits Paraguay

16. (U) On 5/4, Chen Shui-bian, President of Taiwan, arrived in Paraguay ahead of his official 3-day state visit. Chen's visit to Paraguay is his second since May 2001 and is set to strengthen bilateral ties and promote global peace and prosperity. The Government of Taiwan has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in assistance to Paraguay in recent years. However, the opposition parties stated prior to Chen's visit that they will not participate in the Congressional session in protest against the GOP but not/not related to Taiwan.

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